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Haiti and Igboland: *A Shared History*

By Idenze Ezeme

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Ibo Granmoun

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HAITI AND IGBOLAND

Haiti and Igboland: A Shared History

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The history of Haiti and the Igbo people is deeply connected through culture, resistance, and spirituality. The song ‘Ibo Granmoun’ represents the Igbo tradition of having no kings or queens, meaning they take orders from no one. In Haitian Creole, Ibo Granmoun translates to “Igbos take orders from no one.”

The song Ibo Granmoun shows the Igbo heritage in the Haitian people in a spiritual way.

Igbos brought to Haiti during the transatlantic slave trade introduced this idea to the Haitian culture.

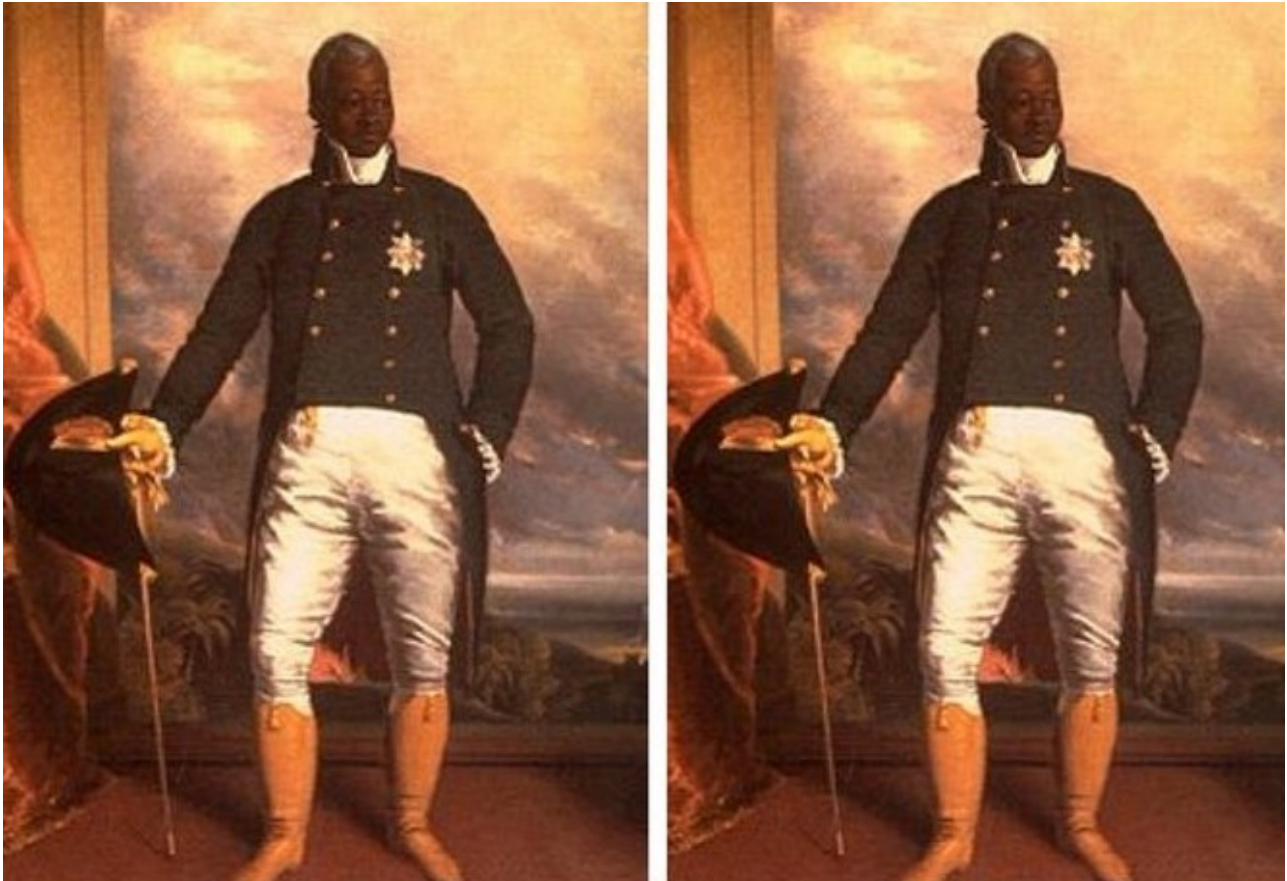
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Igbo Influence in Haiti

Because of their strong belief in democracy and freedom, the Igbo people were among the most rebellious against slavery. In Haiti, when honoring the memory of Igbo ancestors, a special dance is performed. This dance includes movements symbolizing the breaking of chains, representing the Igbo’s fight against oppression.

Igbo people who were enslaved in Haiti and other parts of the Americas had one of the highest rates of suicide among African groups. This tragic history is remembered in Haitian Vodou through the expression Ibo touye tèt li, meaning “the Igbo killed themselves.” Another influence of the Igbo language in Haitian Creole is the use of the letter “M” as a short form for mwen (meaning “me”).

Igbo Heritage in Haitian Leadership



Henri Christophe, the first king of independent Haiti © IgboLité

It has been claimed that Henri Christophe, the first king of independent Haiti, had Igbo ancestry. He was born in 1767 as a former slave of Bambara ethnicity from West Africa. His leadership and strength reflect the Igbo spirit of resilience and determination.

The Igbo Dance: A Symbol of Freedom

The Igbo people have always valued freedom and democracy. Because of this, they were one of the most rebellious groups against slavery. Their resistance was so strong that they became known for their fight against oppression.

In Haiti, the memory of Igbo ancestors is honoured through dance. During these ceremonies, dancers perform special movements that symbolize the breaking of chains. These movements represent the strength, courage, and unbreakable spirit of the Igbo people. Through dance, their struggle for freedom is remembered and celebrated.

A traditional Haitian dance honouring Igbo ancestors, symbolizing the breaking of chains and the fight for freedom. © IgboLité

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Nze is an Igbo history and culture enthusiast with an in-depth passion for exploring the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and historical narratives of the Igbo people. His works is mostly focused on pre-colonial Igbo societies, traditional belief systems, leadership systems, and the impact of European colonialism.



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